

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-02 L-03 PM-05 SS-15 EB-08 /048 R

DRAFTED BY ARA/ECP:DTAHER:LJ

APPROVED BY ARA:JBUSHNELL

-----076977 011850Z /42

R 011724Z MAR 78

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 052334

STADIS////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR

SUBJECT: ARA WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS FEBRUARY 18-24

1. THE ARA CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE OPENED FEBRUARY

27. THE 25 AMBASSADORS AND 4 PRINCIPAL OFFICERS PARTICIPATING WILL EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH SECRETARY VANCE, ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN, DR. BRZEZINSKI, GOVERNOR GILLIGAN, AND MANY OTHER HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER EXECUTIVE BRANCH AGENCIES.

2. HEARINGS ON THE ADMINISTRATION'S LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE FOR DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OF UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS ARE EXPECTED TO BEGIN IN THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ON MARCH 16. THE PACKAGE WAS SENT BY PRESIDENT CARTER TO THE CONGRESS LAST AUGUST. IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION WAS INTRODUCED IN OCTOBER.

3. PANAMA CANAL TREATY DEBATE: THE SENATE WENT INTO
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CLOSED SESSION ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, AND PART OF WEDNESDAY TO DISCUSS DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PANAMA. THE CONSENSUS WAS THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE THAT TORRIJOS IS PERSONALLY INVOLVED AND THAT THE ISSUE IS PERIPHERAL TO THE TREATY DEBATE. THE OPPONENTS PERIODICALLY RE-IGNITE THE CHARGES THAT THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE IS

INDICATIVE OF THE IRRESPONSIBILITY AND CORRUPT NATURE OF THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, BUT IN GENERAL THE ISSUE HAS FADED.

4. EARLY RETURNS FROM THE FEBRUARY 26 ELECTIONS IN COLOMBIA INDICATE THAT JULIO CESAR TURBAY WILL WIN THE LIBERAL PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY BY A SUBSTANTIAL MARGIN OVER FORMER PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS. TURBAY THEN WOULD BE THE FRONT-RUNNER IN THE JUNE 4 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AGAINST THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S CANDIDATE, BELISARIO BETANCUR. TURBAY, WHO SERVED AS AMBASSADOR HERE IN 1975-76, IS BASICALLY FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD THE U.S. HE HAS PROMISED OUR AMBASSADOR IN COLOMBIA CLOSER COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS INTERDICTION IF ELECTED, THOUGH THE INVOLVEMENT OF SOME OF HIS SUPPORTERS WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING GIVES CAUSE FOR CONCERN. THE NEW COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT WILL TAKE OFFICE ON AUGUST 7.

5. THE LEAD PROGRAM IN CBS SIXTY MINUTES FEBRUARY 26 NEWS SHOW EXPLORED ALLEGATIONS THAT FIDEL CASTRO HAD FACILITATED LOANS TO THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND WAS SOMEHOW CONNECTED WITH THE FLOW OF COCAINE FROM COLOMBIA TO THE U.S. ARA IS ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN TRANSCRIPTS OF THE PROGRAM.

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6. PRESIDENT SOMOZA, ADDRESSING A LIBERAL PARTY RALLY FEBRUARY 26, ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO RELINQUISH BOTH THE PRESIDENCY AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IN 1981, THE END OF HIS PRESENT TERM OF OFFICE. IN ADDITION, HE STATED HE WOULD RECOMMEND CHANGES IN THE ELECTORAL LAWS EASING THE PARTICIPATION OF OPPOSITION PARTIES, A CHANGE IN TRADE UNION LAWS WHICH WOULD PROMOTE UNIMPEDED FREE ASSOCIATION, AND URGED A DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALL SECTORS OF THE SOCIETY.

7. SUGAR: THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION OPENED THE WASHINGTON PORTION OF ITS HEARINGS FEBRUARY 27 ON A PERMANENT U.S. SUGAR IMPORT REGIME TO REPLACE THE EMERGENCY ONE ENUNCIATED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATIONS OF NOVEMBER 11, 1977 AND JANUARY 20, 1978. MEANWHILE OUR ISA RATIFICATION EFFORT LIES DEAD IN THE WATER WHILE THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY DEBATE CONTINUES AND AS THE BUREAUCRACIES START TO ORGANIZE TO GIVE CONCRETE FORM TO SENATOR CHURCH'S INTEREST IN A MORE SOLID BASE FOR OUR SUGAR POLICY.

8. COPPER - SECTION 201 PETITION: TWELVE OF THE LARGEST U.S. COPPER COMPANIES PETITIONED THE ITC LAST WEEK TO HAVE A QUOTA PLACED ON IMPORTS OF REFINED COPPER, BASED ON THE AVERAGE AMOUNT IMPORTED BETWEEN 1970 AND 1975. IN THE LAST TWO YEARS IMPORTS HAVE BEEN DOUBLE THAT FIGURE. WE ARE TRYING TO ASSESS THE IMPACT ON LATIN PRODUCERS AND EXPORTERS OF A RANGE OF COPPER ITEMS.

9. ON FEBRUARY 16, ROSALYNN CARTER ATTENDED A PROTOCOLARY SESSION OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES HONORING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN. MRS. CARTER DELIVERED A SPEECH AND
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READ A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT CONGRATULATING THE COMMISSION ON ITS ANNIVERSARY AND RECOGNIZING ITS MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: DTAHER:LJ
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197803118/aaaadwvc.tel
Line Count: 139
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: 2faed1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3152096
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARA WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS FEBRUARY 18-24
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, SNAR, ETRD, EMIN, XM, XK, XL, US
To: ARA POSTS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/2faed1ba-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014